



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Massachusetts State Office

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SIGN-UP PERIOD EXTENDED FOR MASS. LANDOWNERS TO RESTORE AND PROTECT FLOOD-PRONE LANDS WITH ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUNDS

AMHERST, Mass. (March 27, 2009) – The deadline has been extended for Massachusetts landowners with land in flood-prone areas to apply for assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). **Eligible landowners can sign up for floodplain easements through April 10, 2009 at their local USDA Service Center.**

NRCS will provide up to \$145 million nationwide to eligible landowners through the floodplain easement component of its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The funds will be used to restore an estimated 60,000 acres of frequently flooded land in the U.S. to its natural state and create jobs.

USDA service center locations are listed on-line at <http://offices.usda.gov> or in the phone book under Federal Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture. For information about EWP Program floodplain easements, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/Floodplain/index.html.

"We will be working with landowners in rural communities who voluntarily agree to restore the floodplains to their natural condition by placing their land into easements," said Christine Clarke, NRCS Massachusetts State Conservationist. "These easements will convert environmentally sensitive lands into riparian corridors and wooded bottomlands that are so vital for fish and wildlife habitat and to mitigate downstream flooding."

Jobs can be created in the engineering, biology and construction fields when landowners establish conservation practices to plant trees and native grasses and restore the hydrology of the floodplain on the land entered into easement, said Clarke.

The funding, obtained from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, includes both technical and financial assistance. The goal is to have all floodplain easements acquired and restored within 12-18 months. No more than \$30 million can be spent in any one state.

The EWP Program's floodplain easement component allows NRCS to purchase easements on lands damaged by flooding. The restored floodplain will generate many public benefits, such as increased flood protection, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, increased carbon sequestration as permanent vegetative cover is re-established, and a reduced need for future public disaster assistance.

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NOTE TO EDITORS/REPORTERS: If you would like to include local contact information, please see the following list for the office that serves your area.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service – Massachusetts Offices

BARNSTABLE FIELD OFFICE

270 Communications Way, Unit 1G
Hyannis, MA 02601
508-771-6476
Serving **Cape Cod and the Islands**

GREENFIELD FIELD OFFICE

55 Federal Street, Room 290
Greenfield, MA 01301
413-772-0384 ext 3
Serving **Franklin County**

HADLEY FIELD OFFICE

195 Russell Street, Suite B6
Hadley, MA 01035
413-585-1000 ext 3
Serving **Hampden and Hampshire counties**

HOLDEN FIELD OFFICE

52 Boyden Road, Room 10
Holden, MA 01520
508-829-4477 ext 3
Serving **Worcester County**

PITTSFIELD FIELD OFFICE

78 Center Street, Suite 206,
Pittsfield, MA 01201
413-443-1776 ext 3
Serving **Berkshire County**

WESTFORD FIELD OFFICE

319 Littleton Road, Suite 205
Westford, MA 01886
978-692-1904 ext 3
Serving Essex, **Middlesex and Suffolk counties**

WEST WAREHAM FIELD OFFICE

15 Cranberry Highway
West Wareham, MA 02576
508-295-5151 ext 2
Serving **Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth counties**

Para informacion en Español: 508-829-4477 ext. 110.